

**Members Present:**

John Parrish  
Ashley Arrington  
Josh O'Conner  
Hutch Kerns  
Barry Mundt

**Council Present**

Cecil Bothwell

**Staff Present:**

Roderick Simmons, Director  
Debbie Ivester, Assistant Director  
Alex Carmichael, Interim Special Projects Coordinator  
Abigail Riley, Special Projects Coordinator  
Sandra Travis, Program Supervisor-Festivals  
Al Kopf, Parks, Planning and Development Superintendent  
Christy Bass, Interim Business Services Superintendent

**Guests Present**

Adrian Vassallo, Asheville Downtown Association

**Call to Order**

Hutch Kerns called the meeting to order at 12:34

Debbie announced that staff member Abigail Riley has accepted a new position with the City in the Development Services Department as the Business Process Analyst. Abby has worked closely with the Board and Friday will be her last day. Alex Carmichael will be serving in Abby's role in the interim until the position is filled. Debbie offered her best wishes to Abby and welcomed Alex. Hutch also thanked Abby and welcomed Alex on behalf of the Board.

**1. Approval of January Minutes**

Josh O'Conner moved to approve the January minutes without revision. Ashley Arrington seconded. All voted to approve and the motion passed unanimously.

**2. Presentation: Pack Square Park Stage**

Debbie introduced Adrian Vassallo, President of the Asheville Downtown Association (ADA), who came to present their plan to install a canopy on the Pack Square Park stage.

Adrian thanked Debbie. He said that 10 years ago the ADA Board pledged \$50,000 to Pack Square Park because they considered it to be the living room of

downtown. The ADA thought it was appropriate to make a significant pledge to the initiative to reshape the Park and create the best venue in downtown. The canopy was discussed in the park design plans at that time, but was not constructed which meant that ADA was unable to bring large-scale, professional performances to the Park. ADA pulled together Hass Hale, designer of the Pergola and Peter Belt of Red Sky Shelters. ADA asked how much it would cost to build a canopy that 1) reflected the aesthetic nature of the program that Haas was involved with, and 2) was functional, permanent, and would allow for use by a wide variety of programs in the Park. The Downtown Association and several community partners have already committed to 50% of the necessary funding.

Two weeks ago ADA submitted a \$50,000 Tourism Product Development Fund application to the Tourism Development Authority (TDA). If successful, it will fully fund the canopy project. ADA feels a \$100,000 budget will allow for project completion by Memorial Day of this year - in time for a summer kick-off for the downtown community.

Adrian presented the initial design that Haas and Peter worked on. The Pergola design elements will be incorporated into the original design, and a removable screen for projecting movies and other artistic projects will be added. The new features will benefit the ADA and other organizations - most notably the Asheville Symphony and Shindig on the Green. The Screen could support the Clips of Faith Film Tour put on by New Belgium. This kind of film tour benefits the City and other organizations involved. This venue could attract 1,000-2,000 people per movie event.

ADA met with the Symphony, Shindig and a working group to talk about an unveiling. There has not been a large downtown event on Memorial Day in eons. The tentative schedule would have Shindig on Saturday, a concert similar to Downtown After Five on Sunday, and a Memorial Day ceremony and concert by the Symphony on Monday.

ADA is cautiously optimistic that the TDA grant application will be successful. ADA has never applied for funding before; but this project hits all of the criteria the TDA is looking for.

Roderick asked if the lifespan of the canopy was discussed. Adrian said yes. There are two parts of the canopy: the structure, which will last as long as the Pergola, and the fabric of the canopy, which is a 15-year, PVC coated fabric. ADA already considered a maintenance fund. The fabric itself is not that much of the cost, so 10% will be put away to replace it in 10 years.

Hutch asked if staff was comfortable with the ADA placing objects on City property. Roderick said yes, the ADA has worked with the Building Safety Department since the first steps in the design process, so staff has been involved all along. Hutch asked if staff was comfortable with the specific design. Roderick

confirmed. Ashley asked if there will be lighting available. Adrian said yes. Ashley asked for staff to double check to make sure the electrical outlets worked.

Cecil offered his congratulations. He thinks this is one of the missing pieces in the Park and will be a big improvement. But he was told that one problem at the stage is the fire codes that prevent the access road from being blocked by semitrailers offloading equipment. Adrian recognized that the area around the stage is a little cumbersome, but it is not unachievable. Ashley said that the challenge is the square, not the parking, because there has to be space left for fire trucks to turn around. But every parking spot behind the stage can be rented and used for unloading equipment.

Hutch asked about funding for annual maintenance. Roderick said that Council will have to decide whether or not to accept it as a donation and will consider the operating budget at that time. Hutch asked if those funds were allocated in the \$100,000. Adrian said that construction cost will be \$70,000-\$90,000, and that overage built into the grant request is for maintenance.

Hutch said that no action is required for this item.

### **3. Presentation: River-to-Ridge Initiative**

Roderick Simmons presented an update on the River-to-Ridge Initiative, a multi-modal transportation tie-in for the greenway system. Roderick said there are always grants to apply for and our efforts have been to tie projects together rather than take a shotgun approach. The master plan in 2009 called for connecting destinations within the park system together.

The River-to-Ridge Initiative was designed to link parks and greenway systems and enhance connectivity. The 14-mile greenway system is broken into 3 corridors: the Downtown Corridor, the Urban River Corridor, and the Natural River Corridor. The Downtown Corridor extends 6.5 miles from Weaver Park to Beaucatcher Park. The Urban River Corridor extends 3.5 miles along the east and west sides of the French Broad River. The Natural River Corridor extends from Amboy Rd. to the Waller Tract. Five of the fourteen miles are complete.

The University of North Carolina – Asheville Foundation came before Council last week with plans to complete a section of the Reed Creek Greenway on the former Momentum site. The City will piggy-back on that to complete the design for Reed Creek. New Belgium is going to complete the section on the west side of French Broad, and the City will issue a RFQ for the east sub-section. Council has approved the contract for the design and construction of Beaucatcher. The designs for Clingman Forest and Town Branch were approved by Council two weeks ago, and staff is pursuing grant funding for those projects.

Roderick pointed out the area around the Clingman Café Depot, where the East, West, and North sections will be. From that point in the River Arts District one can go anywhere on the multi-model corridor.

The Downtown corridor will focus on pedestrian connections, bike lanes, and park destinations as outlined in the Downtown Master Plan as the highest priority. The intent on the Beaucatcher Greenway is to make an experience on the ridgeline that overlooks downtown and provides connections to the three facilities. The new recreation center will provide pedestrian connections between Town Branch and Depot Street. The bike lane connectors from Murray Hill Park to the Dr. Wesley Grant, Sr. Southside Center will be on-road from Bartlett to Lyman, Depot, Livingston, and Victoria Streets. Some of those lanes will be tricky because of current on-road parking.

Phase three of the Downtown Corridor will connect Weaver Park to Aston Park by way of the Clingman Forest Greenway and Reed Creek North and South. The Beaucatcher Reservoir Park and White Fawn Park will bookend the Beaucatcher Greenway, with Overlook Park in the middle. The spurs coming off will connect Mountainside, McCormick Field, and the Kenilworth neighborhood through on-road connections. Five park facilities will be connected by one greenway.

A trailhead will be located at Helen's Bridge. The Historical Resources Commission designated Helen's Bridge as a landmark and TDA funding is being considered for emphasis as a tourist destination. This is a key area in the Downtown Master Plan, the Parks Master Plan, and the 2020 Plan.

Town Branch and Beaucatcher will connect through the Southside Ave. Transit Corridor, which consists of bike lanes, greenways, and sidewalks. Town Branch will connect McCormick Field all the way down to Depot St. at the Grant Center. Depot St. connects to the Clingman Forest Greenway. There are on-street parking considerations in blending in pedestrian transit and bike lanes.

The north section of the Downtown Corridor is Reed Creek. Reed Creek will connect from UNCA to the French Broad, then to Clingman Forest. The UNCA Foundation is raising funds for the unfinished northern portion. Clingman Forest runs from the Asheville Middle School, through Housing Authority property, to Aston Park.

The Urban River corridor runs along the French Broad. New Belgium agreed to build a section on the west side. The City is discussing the development of the Progress Energy site with Duke Energy. French Broad-East goes all the way to Amboy Rd. The park destinations are Jean Webb Park and the French Broad River Park. The Wilma Dykman RATIP is almost done.

The Natural River Corridor runs from Amboy Rd. at Carrier Park all the way out to the Waller Tract. The Hominy Creek Greenway connects Amboy Rd. Park,

Karen Cragolin Park, Carrier Park, Hominy Creek Park, and the Waller Track. These will connect the East and West French Broad sections to Hominy Creek and extend the system all the way out to West Asheville.

Staff is working with the Greenway Commission for 2017 and beyond, and has applied for over \$1.7 million in grant funding this year in an effort to leverage grant funding to further build out the system.

Barry asked if there is a road map for driving along the various pieces. Roderick said that there is a greenway map, but it is hard to use for driving purposes. Debbie said that we are still in the planning stage so there are no maps published yet, but we could get that worked up and sent to board members. Roderick offered to set up a new member tour. John said that he would like to have that set up.

Hutch thanked Roderick and said that this kind of information was incredibly encouraging and on the right track. Roderick said it came from the 2009 Master Plan, which called for connectivity. Hutch asked if a formal endorsement would be helpful. Roderick said yes. Barry motioned to endorse the River-to-Ridge Initiative, Ashley seconded, and the motion carried with all in favor.

#### **4. Director's Report**

Roderick gave the Director's Report. He said that the Department has applied for over \$1.7 million in grant funding, and expressed thanks to Abby for her work on that. He said that we are currently going through the budget process. There will be a Council retreat in March, and staff will provide an update on any changes.

#### **5. Reports:**

##### **a. Bele Chere Board**

In Todd's absence, Hutch referenced the Bele Chere Board report Todd submitted to the Board prior to the meeting, and asked if anyone had comment or questions. Hearing none, the report was not read but accepted as submitted.

##### **b. Asheville Area Riverfront Redevelopment Commission**

Wayne was not present so the report was moved to next month.

#### **6. Other Business**

Josh noted that the Asheville Parks and Greenways Foundation liaison is not current and asked for that to be put on the March agenda.

#### **7. Adjournment**

Josh motioned to adjourn, Barry seconded, the motion passed with all in favor.